

West Seattle Triangle Advisory Group
Meeting Notes April 14, 2010
West Seattle Senior Center, 6:00 PM

Summary Notes

- The West Seattle Triangle area is a “working community” and should continue to be a place where a diversity of businesses thrive even as the area changes over time.
- Businesses, residents, property owners, employees, members of the larger community all should have a voice in the planning for the West Seattle Triangle.
- Planning for public rights-of-way is an opportunity to establish new patterns and neighborhood identities incrementally over the coming years.
- There is interest in calming traffic and providing safer places for pedestrians within the area bounded by SW Alaska Street, Fauntleroy Way SW and 35th Avenue SW. This can be accomplished while also serving the needs of businesses and service providers in the area.
- Planning for the RapidRide alignment will continue later in 2010. The West Seattle Triangle planning process can help inform decisions along SW Alaska Street and 35th Avenue SW, and will include discussion about trade-offs between travel lanes and parking, and safe pedestrian passage across the arterials.
- David Hewitt presented four alternative approaches to the future use of publicly-owned land in the street right-of-way as development occurs in the future. His alternatives depicted various amounts of land dedicated to pedestrian amenities, parking, landscaping and green features, and travel lanes. All four alternatives depicted the equivalent number or more parking spaces that are present today.
- Meeting participants are interested in seeing more trees and vegetation incorporated into the Triangle area. There was interest in preserving sight lines to store fronts and sight lines/ pedestrian scale lighting to ensure pedestrian safety.
- Two of David’s alternatives depicted woonerfs along east-west streets. Woonerfs are less formal roadways that feature slow moving vehicle travel and an emphasis on pedestrian use. Meeting participants were interested in the concept, and expressed the need for visibility and access to businesses along woonerfs. Other people suggested pairing park-like woonerfs with taller buildings, or creating woonerfs along north-south streets to take advantage of sunlight from the south.
- Several people mentioned use of alleys as active spaces. Alleys also serve “back of the house” functions and free-up building frontages for retail frontages and other uses.
- Vehicle and pedestrian travel across Fauntleroy Way SW is a challenge now. Discussions about Fauntleroy SW will continue in future meetings.

Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD) planner Susan McLain welcomed the advisory group members and members of the community in attendance. She reviewed the project scope and outcomes, and announced upcoming meetings with Seattle Parks Department staff and Seattle Department of Transportation Parking group.

Advisory group members in attendance: Catherine Benotto, Renee Commons, Sharonn Meeks, Susan Melrose, Patti Mullen, Brandon Nicholson, Denny Onslow, Chas Redmond, Josh Sutton.

Presentation by Casey Hildreth, Seattle Department of Transportation Advisor Discussion about Existing Traffic Circulation Patterns

Casey Hildreth, planner for the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) said that the public realm concept plan will result in streetscapes filling-in over time, creating a neighborhood identity as development occurs. He provides some observations about the existing function of streets in the Triangle area:

- The Triangle property (the area bounded by Alaska, 35th and Fauntleroy) is relatively self-contained with respect to vehicle travel
- There is an opportunity to better-manage traffic along Fauntleroy Way SW. Casey identified some designs to consider.
- He described the routes identified in the City's bicycle master plan and pedestrian master plan, and described the 30% design for Bus RapidRide. He noted that the timing of the West Seattle Triangle process will help inform further design of SW Alaska Street as planning for RapidRide continues.

Josh Sutton noted that parking along Alaska Way SW is proposed to be removed in the 30% design for Bus RapidRide.

Brandon said that Seattle has generous rights-of-way compared to other areas of the city.

Chas said that the group needs to think about connections to parks properties to the east, and attend to designs along arterials.

Casey agreed that this is a good opportunity to address those issues.

Sharonn noted that this is a residential neighborhood. People need to safely cross Alaska to go to the Y and access other services in the Triangle area.

Susan Melrose said that turning left from Fauntleroy is difficult. People driving east on Fauntleroy turn right onto Avalon, left onto 35th in order to reach areas north of Fauntleroy. This creates messy intersections at 35th/Avalon and 35th/Fauntleroy.

Renee echoed this concern.

Josh pointed-out that people cut-through the Triangle, creating unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

Denny asked if there are any counts for pedestrians along Fauntleroy. Casey said there are no detailed counts for pedestrians at this time.

Patti pointed-out that the South Park bridge is closing. That action may impact traffic in this area.

Presentation by David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects

Advisor Discussion about Four Streetscape Options for Non-Arterial Streets in the Triangle

David said it is important to let the details of an area inform the future vision, and also to let a vision inform the design of details. He presented options for what is possible as a way of looking at the “resource” which is the amount of land devoted to street rights-of-way in the Triangle area. He outlined four alternative frameworks for non-arterial streets. Each of the alternatives devoted different amounts of land to parking, pedestrian hardscape, landscaping and vehicle travel lanes. These alternatives can be found on the project web site at:

www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/WestSeattleTriangle/

Chas suggested that the woonerf be located adjacent to higher building heights.

Brandon noted that recent project Alta Mira and Mural are both 85’ in height.

David noted the possible trade-off between more space dedicated to sidewalks and pedestrian amenities on the ground, with more height to allow the same floor area in a building that is taller but uses less land.

Renee mentioned the importance of safety, and said that trees should be located to make sure there is visual access for pedestrians.

David said there are lots of factors in placing trees, including the type of tree, the choice to plant in clusters instead of row. He noted that a diversity of trees can be used.

Denny mentioned the importance of pedestrian-scale lighting located beneath the canopy of trees. He also noted the importance of traffic calming/ slowing cars at intersections.

David pointed-out that all of the non-arterial streets in the alternatives depict curb bulbs at intersections to increase the visual presence of pedestrians waiting to cross the street, and to visually narrow the street which tends to slow vehicles.

Catherin suggested that north-south streets be considered candidates for woonerfs, giving the solar access from the south.

David acknowledged that he had always thought of the north-south streets as connectors through the area.

Casey noted that none of the streets in the alternatives are arterials, providing flexibility for design.

David said that the discussion about Fauntleroy Way SW will include looking at movement on- and off- Fauntleroy into the Triangle. He said he sees that travel through the Triangle area is slower.

Sharonn mentioned the importance of views from houses south of the Triangle area.

Denny suggested the group consider the use of alleys as green streets.

Chas suggested looking at the front and back of blocks.

Brendon said it is important to businesses to have “back of the house” functions of loading, services, access to parking, etc.

Josh asked why David did not consider one-way streets in the area.

David said he could not see a strong reason for one-way streets; one-way streets can be confusing, and two-way streets tend to encourage slower driving.

Casey mentioned that, north of Fauntleroy, several streets have one-way access at the intersection of Fauntleroy to control access on, but those street are two-way streets away from the intersection.

David mentioned the example of Madison Park as an area with slow vehicle travel and lots of pedestrians.

Denny suggested that this area be considered for under-grounding electrical utilities.

David said that overhead wires require upper-level setbacks of buildings and therefore affect property. He said there are many long-term benefits to undergrounding utilities.

Susan Melrose said this is a great idea.

Brandon noted the presence of conduit banks under sidewalks in South Lake Union.

At this point, David opened the conversation to all people in the room.

Vicki, area resident, said she support the idea of a woonerf along SW Snoqualmie Street

Kandie Jennings, with Tom’s Automotive, expressed concern that their shop would not have access to their business with implementation of a woonerf along SW Oregon Street.

David said that woonerfs can feature auto access. He noted Occidental Avenue near the stadiums, which serves cars, trucks and pedestrians. He also noted Pike Place near the Pike

Place Market as a street that accommodated pedestrians, parking, through-traffic and deliveries.

Renee asked about parking associated with residential projects.

Denny explained that his project did not include 1:1 ratio of parking to unit because the market does not demand that level of parking. He explained that he built excess amounts of parking in a project on Capitol Hill.

Brendon noted that census trends point to lower car ownership patterns especially among younger people.

Chas mentioned that the ski shop needs parking in front. Susan McLain said that she spoke with one of the owners of the ski shop.

Dr. Terrell Harrington said that his office has five medical providers. He is concerned about the potential loss of parking from in front of his business along SW Alaska Street.

Susan Melrose said the north-south woonerf concept could serve the YMCA.

Sharonn said the north-south pedestrian access in the area is critical to residential neighbors.

Casey pointed-out that the north-south blocks are longer, and the east-west streets are shorter. He noted that it may be easier to implement the woonerf concept on shorter blocks.

Josh asked how street changes are implemented.

Brandon explained that street improvements are made incrementally over time as development occurs.

Casey said that sometimes public dollars can be used to invest in street improvements as well.

Josh asked about plans for the RapidRide alignment.

Casey said that designs associated with RapidRide will include rechannelization (lane configuration changes), but not include moving curbs in most locations.

Josh said that RapidRide will “cannibalize” parking along SW Alaska street, but will not include landscaping.

Casey said that RapidRide alignment planning will begin later this year. The West Seattle Triangle process can inform the RapidRide planning process. There is opportunity to affect the design of SW Alaska Street.

Brandon said that the benefit of a concept plan is that, relative to standard SDOT standards, the concept plan can provide better solutions to parking and other aspects of street design.

Susan Melrose suggested that a pedestrian island be located in the center of Alaska to provide refuge to pedestrians.

Catherine mentioned an example of back-in parking, and said that pedestrian visibility can be an issue with this parking design.

David acknowledged that pedestrian visibility can be an issue. He suggested that trees could be clustered and pedestrian lighting can help mitigate pedestrian visibility issues.

Denny said that the concept plan should acknowledge the topography of the area. For example SW Oregon is sloped west of 36th Avenue SW.

Judy Sweeney, Alki Lumber, said the alternatives are a pretty plan, but they don't work for a working lumber yard. She said the planning process needs to take into account numerous employees and trucks with 60-foot trailers.

Jon Hartog, Doyle's Automotive, said the business has been at its current location since 1975. He said the impact from RapidRide concerns him, and questions why Fauntleroy was not chosen as the RapidRide route.

Abdy Farid said that the long-term vision for this planning effort is many years in the future. He suggested that SW Oregon Street could connect the Triangle and the Junction business area. He also suggested that parking be retained along a portion of SW Alaska Street between 35th and 38th streets.

Another meeting participant said that residents are already impacted by informal park and ride, and suggested that the landscaped median along SW 38th Street be reconfigured for angled park-and-ride parking. He also suggest single family-zoned areas at the northern edge of the Triangle planning area be rezoned to a multifamily zone designation.

Joan Jeffrey, a resident at 35th and SW Alaska Street, said that getting out of their parking garage is already a problem. She suggested keeping parking on Alaska in the easternmost portion of the street. She urged the City to ensure that traffic is calm enough in this area for cars to safely exit the parking garage in this area.

Dr. Harrington emphasized that this is a working neighborhood, and said that getting access to his clinic is an important value. He is one of the few primary care physicians in West Seattle.

Sharonn observed that this advisory group has a challenge in front of them. She acknowledged the investment in time and money by existing business owners, owners and tenants. She said that this is an opportunity to create the right thing; something that is acceptable to all.